

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28925/2412-0774.2024.2.9>

UDC 374.7:342.9(410)

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FEATURES OF REGULATORY SUPPORT OF NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

The article analyzes the regulatory support of non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland through the main types of legal acts of the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The adult education system in this country is characterized, which is represented by formal and non-formal education institutions, associations, councils, and committees on adult education. It is emphasized that in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the reform of adult education is aimed at the formation of the necessary professional skills; improvement of employment prospects; modernization of the existing educational system in accordance with employers' requests; establishment of the financial support programme, which will promote the non-formal learning opportunities for the adult population. It is noted that in each country of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), the development of non-formal adult education has specific features: a high degree of autonomy for all providers, cooperation and partnership between educational institutions and employers, etc. The non-formal education providers are also presented (non-profit, charitable, private organisations, universities, colleges, and other educational institutions). The conclusion is made that, the reform of adult education has been put front and centre by the British government; it is presented by regulatory and legal acts in each country and is aimed at promoting the lifelong learning.

Keywords: adult education, lifelong learning, non-formal education, regulatory and legal support, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

Non-formal education as a major form of adult education is a modern trend in different countries all over the world, the essence of which is determined by the provision of quality educational services to various population groups, the promotion of personal development, opportunities for employment and career prospects, as well as the spread of the concept of lifelong learning.

UNESCO's Fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education states that the most powerful countries in the world promote the lifelong learning and at the same time emphasize the importance of adult education and non-formal learning, and improve mechanisms for its recognition, validation and accreditation. Non-formal adult education is a crucial asset in facing the social and economic uncertainty, environmental and digital disruption; it is a vital part of strengthening social cohesion, equal opportunities, gender equality and the economic vitality of our societies (5th Global Report on adult learning and education, 2022).

The modern non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is one of the most diverse systems in the world, which is focused on adaptability, flexibility, competitiveness, accessibility and efficiency. It includes various

forms of digital technologies and platforms, as well as distance learning, e-learning, mass open online courses and open educational resources, etc. (Boiarska-Khomenko, 2018).

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, new programmes and projects are invariably created to support international educational processes, in which significant attention is paid to improving the qualifications of adults (Shamanska, 2021).

Researchers pay great attention to the recognition of non-formal learning. The UK has always had a diversity of provision and variety in its approach to the delivery of learning opportunities, so the formal certification of this learning promotes public understanding and confidence in both the quality of education and the standard of its outcomes. The main principles of recognition of non-formal learning can be found in QAA Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning. Education providers develop their own approaches to accrediting learning that is substantive and meaningful, including learning attained outside a formal learning environment. The purpose of the Guidelines is to encourage the providers to explore a range of issues that can emerge in the process of validation. The Guidelines can be a source of information for employers, regulatory bodies, stakeholders, and others (Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning, 2004).

The legislation formation process of the non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK in general and its countries – England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland in particular) was studied by Ukrainian and foreign scientists. Experts were doing research on the foreign experience of implementation of non-formal adult education (Lukianova, 2017), its features from historical (Shamanska, 2021) and management aspects (Oros, 2018), the prospects of adult basic education in Britain (Kovalenko, 2019); modern forms of adult education in the UK: national and local perspectives (Robbins & Rogers, 2023); the benefits of non-formal education for lifelong learning in the UK (Shah, 2020); the main trends of non-formal adult education (Sibieta & Tahir & Waltmann, 2022); approaches to training of adult educators in the UK (Chychuk, 2015); experience of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (Werquin, 2010); validation of non-formal education in the form of Open Education Resources and Massive Open Online Courses (Harris & Wihak, 2018), etc.

The analysis of research papers confirms that the non-formal education of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has undergone several reformations, which involve the development of strategies and initiatives by the British government. The government's campaign is aimed at transforming the educational system in accordance with the modern requirements and needs of citizens.

As a result of studying and analysis of the foreign experience of regulatory support of non-formal education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will allow us to use progressive ideas for the development of the Ukrainian legal framework for the adult education system, which determines the purpose of our research.

The goal of the article is to analyze the regulatory support of non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland based on the materials of current laws and other regulatory legal acts.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In European countries one of the main legal documents in the field of non-formal adult education is Recommendation 1437 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on non-formal education. The document defines that non-formal education is an integral part of a concept of a lifelong learning, which allows people to acquire the skills and abilities needed to adapt to a continuously changing environment. It is noted that the governments of European countries need to consider the benefits of non-formal organizations when they are

deciding on new policies in the field of adult education, as well as apply innovative information technology to facilitate an access to non-formal education at the national and international level (Recommendation 1437 Non-formal education, 2000).

Adult education regulatory support in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland includes laws, regulations, strategies, reports, etc., including the Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning, 2004; the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009; A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report, 2021; The Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth Report, 2021; Skills and Post-16 Education Act, 2022; Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Act 2023 and others.

In each country of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), the development of non-formal adult education has its own distinguishing features that are also worth studying. England is the largest country of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which is governed directly by the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, that is responsible for legislative regulation and political decision-making. Meanwhile other countries – Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland – have their own devolved governments that are vested with legislative powers in the areas of education, health, culture, environment and transport (How government works, 2024).

It should be noted that the model of public administration of the adult education system in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is characterized by the strengthening of the centralization of education management, a gradual transition from decentralization (which was inherent earlier) to a mixed model of adult education management – decentralized centralism (Oros, 2018).

The adult education system in the UK comprises (Lukianova, 2017):

1. Educational institutions of formal and non-formal education.
2. Committees, councils and associations on adult education.

It should be added that at the national level, the adult education management in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland together with the Department for Education is carried out by (How government works, 2024):

1. The Education and Skills Funding Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Education, that is responsible for funding education and skills providers in England.
2. The Office for Students is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education, which supports a diverse and independent higher education sector.
3. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is the national funding agency investing in science and research in the UK. Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £6 billion. It is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, supported by 7 agencies and public bodies.
4. The Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy and research organisation, which promotes the lifelong learning, employment and inclusion.
5. The Basic Skills Agency is the national agency for basic skills in England and Wales and is funded by the Government. The agency is endeavouring to improve standards of literacy, numeracy and communication skills focusing on those who continue to struggle with their basic skills. Its aim is to develop the national, regional and local strategies.
6. The Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards, which strategic goal is to help the government and employers work together to make the skills system work most effectively. The federation also conducts research and analysis of the labour market, etc.

Over the last decade, adult education and vocational training in the United Kingdom has developed under the unstable political, social and economic circumstances, including the rise in the unemployment rate and the number of refugees from European countries, migration, Brexit, etc. That is why the involvement of the adult population in non-formal education benefits not only people, but also socio-cultural and economic spheres, providing better professional training of workers and strengthening democratic values (Kersh & Laczik, 2021).

According to the analysis of scientific papers, the main purpose of adult education in the United Kingdom is for people aged 19 and over to acquire the skills they need for work, apprenticeship and realization of other educational opportunities (Adult education, 2024).

In the period 2015–2018, the British Government delegated a significant number of powers to regional authorities in England, including those relating to the performance of adult education functions specified in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act. From now on, local authorities became responsible for the allocation of the budget in the field of adult education and ensuring the proper education and training of all adults. Thus, the authority is responsible for providing opportunities to develop the skills needed by local employers. It should be noted that it has such advantages as: reducing skills shortages, increasing productivity and economic prosperity, and improving well-being (The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009).

The introducing of new approaches to adult education reform in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is significant, as over the last decade, government spending on adult education has decreased by a third (Robins, 2021). The key ideas for reforming adult education are set out in the white paper «The Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth», which aims to ensure that every person has the necessary skills to get good jobs and to strengthen links between employers and further education providers. Therefore, the main ideas of adult education improvement are putting employers at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps; making sure people can access training and learning flexibly throughout their lives; reforming funding and accountability for providers, give them more autonomy; supporting innovative technologies and modern teaching methods in further education. The British government realises the economic and social benefits of lifelong learning and promotes «the Lifetime Skills Guarantee» (2020), which outlines the development of new professional skills and the need for lifelong learning.

The document also states that from 2025 every citizen can get the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, equivalent to four years of education, which can be used throughout their life. It will create a more efficient funding system, allow students to choose the available options, and improve the provision of educational services to meet the needs of citizens, employers, and the economy (The Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, 2021).

In our view, it is important to consider the main ideas published in the third Special Report of Session 2019-21 «A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report», which outlines the main responses of the British government to the Committee's recommendations published in the report «A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution» (2020). According to this report, the British government aspires to create a system of non-formal education aimed at increasing productivity, maintaining a high level of employment, and promoting social integration (providing the necessary conditions for the self-realization of everyone). Therefore, the purpose of non-formal education is the development of confidence, motivation, and resilience of the adult population (A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report, 2021).

It is also stated that the concept of lifelong learning should include an element of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). For instance, in England, all unemployed people

can improve their level of the English language, which is especially essential for migrants and refugees, because knowledge of the language is a determining factor in accelerating their adaptation to living conditions in this country (A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution, 2020).

In our view, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has paid due attention to the sectors of the economy most affected by the consequences of COVID-19 and has taken the following important actions, presented in Figure 1 (A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution, 2020).

It is important to emphasize that the implementation of these actions contributed to the growth of the number of adults involved in various types of education (according to the analysis of statistical data surveyed by the Learning and Work Institute in 2023). A detailed study of this document gives us reason to state that now, more than ever before, the British government is ready to cooperate with employers, economic sectors, regions in order to develop adult skills and design strategies for efficient funding.

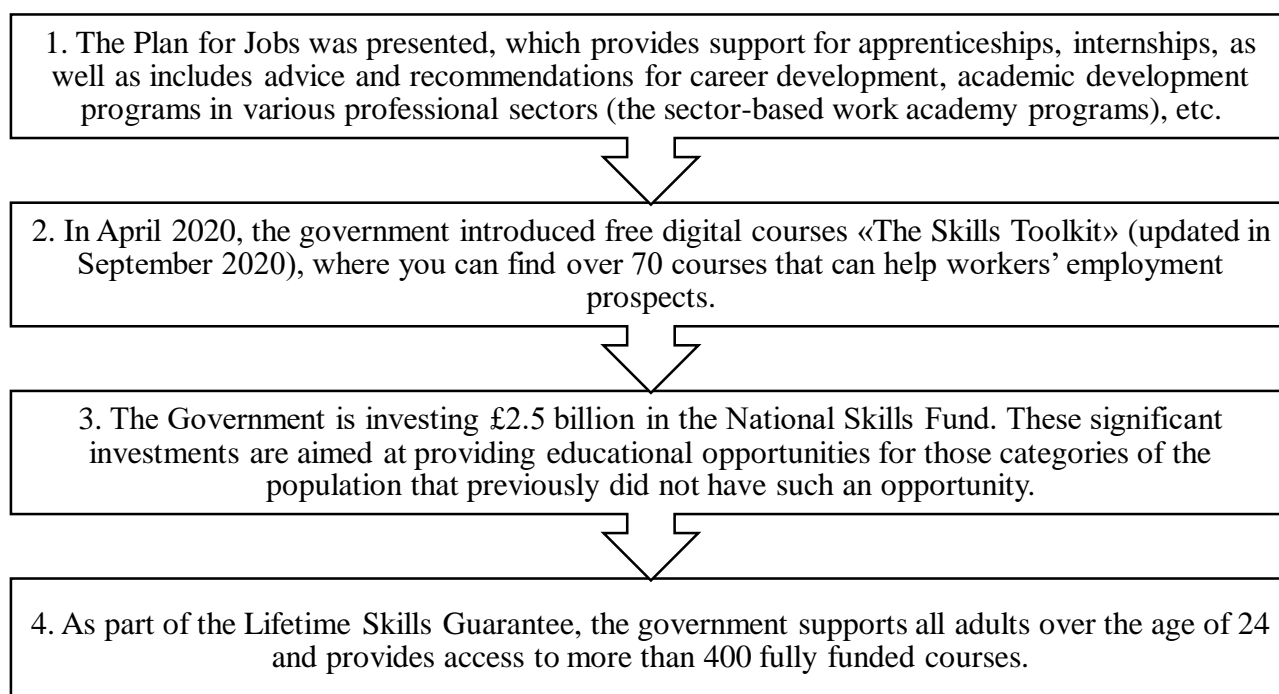


Figure 1. **The main actions of the British government aimed at overcoming the consequences of COVID-19 in the field of adult education**

Source: A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution, 2020.

An important step in the modernization of higher and continuing education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is connected with the passing of the «Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Act 2023», as the document implies the transformation of adult education and training funding, the creation of a unified system of financing (in order to pay for educational courses in colleges and universities), as well as obtaining qualifications, retraining and improving the skills throughout the life. The main purpose of these changes is to create a flexible approach to learning. The government expects that the system will create new educational opportunities for all citizens (young people and adults) in order to receive training funding in various ways (for example, through short courses and modular training) at any time convenient for them. It is related to the globalization and internationalization, changes in the professional and personal development,

as well as the employment-to-population ratio (Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Act, 2023).

Certain aspects of adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are stated in «the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022». The Act implies making provision about local skills improvement plans, further education, functions of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and relating to technical education qualifications and apprenticeships, making provision about the funding of certain post-16 education or training providers and others. The essential measures of this Act are prioritising local needs and local people; supporting flexible study options; boosting the quality of education and training on offer; broadening careers advice; prioritising green skills, etc. (The Skills and Post-16 Education Act, 2022).

According to this Act, adults in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland gain in-demand skills and expand their job opportunities. The Act provides for the modernization of the existing training system in accordance with the requests of employers, providing employees with basic skills for work in the economy, construction, digital technologies, renewable energy and manufacturing; improves the quality of training available by making sure that providers are better run, qualifications are better regulated, and that providers' performance can be effectively assessed (Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, 2021).

Since 2001, in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland there has been a position in a government, that is called The Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, who oversees adult education and lifelong learning. The minister's responsibilities include: overall strategy for post-16 technical education; qualifications reviews (levels 3 and below); apprenticeships and traineeships; further education workforce and funding; Institutes of Technology; local skills improvement plans and Local Skills Improvement Fund; adult education, including basic skills, the National Skills Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; careers education, information and guidance including the Careers and Enterprise Company; higher education quality and reform; Lifelong Loan Entitlement; college governance and accountability; intervention and financial oversight of further education colleges; reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training; international education strategy and the Turing Scheme and others (Minister of State (Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education), 2024).

It should be noted that the Welsh Government outlines its own vision for the development of adult education, which includes supporting employment opportunities and economic prosperity, and confirms the adult education as a catalyst for social cohesion and integration. The features of non-formal adult education are covered in the following legal documents: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy for Wales, 2019 (provides for innovative principles of the English language learning with government funding); Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan, 2019 (focuses on assistance to such categories of population as refugees and asylum seekers); Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 (the Act regulates the main provisions of further and higher education, apprenticeships, adult learning, research and innovation) and others.

In Scotland, the «Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022-2027» is being implemented, which includes the improvement of non-formal education in the following areas: workforce development (involves increasing economic stability of the country); enhancing non-formal learning opportunities (it concerns the development of personal qualities, communication, language and creative skills, cultural competence and financial literacy); focus on access, diversity and inclusion (includes providing educational opportunities to all population groups and removing barriers); educational support, etc. In addition to this, there is another Scottish government document «Education and lifelong learning in an independent Scotland» from March 2024. The main proposals for the

development of lifelong learning, which are aimed at the spread of adult education and the improvement of practical skills, are set out in this paper. The education system is supported by the work of the Scottish Government, local authorities and Scottish communities in different regions and areas of the country. The document describes the possibilities of education and lifelong learning, as well as the proposals for its improvement (Building a New Scotland: Education and lifelong learning in an independent Scotland, 2024).

In 2024 in Northern Ireland, with the cooperation of Open College Network Northern Ireland, AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organization, CO3 Chief Officers 3rd Sector, the Alliance for Lifelong Learning was created. The main aim of the alliance is to support the various forms of adult education and develop the strategy in line with the government's strategy published in March 2022 – Skills for a 10x economy – Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. The alliance is believed to be an important organization for promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all across Northern Ireland, as the level of involvement of adults in various forms of education here is significantly lower than in other part of the UK, Ireland and member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Lifelong Learning in Northern Ireland gets new champion, 2024).

Non-formal adult learning in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is provided by a range of education providers, including Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education Colleges; private, not-profit and charitable organisations, as well as universities and other institutions. A key feature of the British adult education system is a high degree of autonomy for all providers. Colleges are autonomous institutions incorporated by the Act of Parliament, that stimulate innovations and respond flexibly to the needs of society and business. One more important characteristic of non-formal education is the cooperation and the partnership between institutions and local employers (Duvekot, 2015).

Let us now consider the theoretical aspects of training of adult educators in the UK. It has been revealed that in this process the following approaches are used: andragogical approach (based on the knowledge of adults and their abilities, interests, experience); synergistic approach (involves adult education management); competency-based approach (learners move forward at their own pace); activity approach (considers the structure of activity, encourages adults to act); facilitation approach (involves creating a positive atmosphere, cooperation between a teacher and adult learners) and others (Chychuk, 2015).

Nowadays, the validation of non-formal learning is an important issue. An example of this is the study carried out by J. Harris and C. Wihak, in which they emphasize the spread, diversification and recognition of non-formal learning outcomes. Scientists consider the experience of different countries at the national, interdepartmental and institutional levels as well as a formal recognition of Open Education Resources and Massive Open Online Courses. PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) and Qualification Frameworks provide guidance on their recognition (Harris & Wihak, 2018).

P. Werquin (2010) studies the recognition of non-formal and informal education in 22 countries (including the UK). He reviews the factors that influence the recognition of non-formal and informal education outcomes. The author describes the features of non-formal education, the regulatory support, methods, technical procedures, etc. In the UK the employment rate is high, but labour productivity remains low. Considerable attention is paid here to the employment of young people, and the difficulties are related to the insufficient level of skills and qualifications. In Scotland, the importance of gaining professional competences is emphasized. The Scottish government also focuses on the need to develop transferable skills, such as communication, leadership, teamwork, public speaking, etc. (Werquin, 2010).

Overall, there is no direct legislation in relation to the recognition of non-formal learning in the UK. The recognition of prior learning is now commonly termed in this

country, and it is an integral part of the qualifications and credit frameworks that have come to be developed, and which in some cases are still undergoing development. The country is unique in Europe in having a regulated competitive «market» for qualifications in which independent not-for-profit Awarding Organisations design and sell their qualifications throughout the education and training system. In England and Northern Ireland, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation is the authority that regulates all external qualifications (Duvekot, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

According to the analysis of scientific literature and the study of the regulatory support of non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the following conclusions can be made.

Regulatory support of non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is regulated by Recommendation 1437 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on non-formal education, acts, regulations, and other legal acts published by the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, considering the certain features of the countries all across the United Kingdom.

The non-formal adult education is provided by such institutions as: Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education Colleges; private, not-profit and charitable organisations, institutes, universities, etc. A key feature of the British adult education system is a high degree of autonomy for all providers, as well as the cooperation and the partnership between institutions and local employers. The level of adult participation in non-formal education varies across the UK, for instance, the participation rate in the Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales) is significantly higher than in Northern Ireland. The British model of training of adult educators is also studied by the scientists and the common approaches are mentioned, such as andragogical, synergistic, competency-based, activity, facilitation, etc.

According to the analysis of regulatory support, there is no established procedure for recognition of non-formal learning, instead such term as the prior learning is frequently used in the UK. The main principles of accreditation are stated in the QAA Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning. Education providers follow the recommendations, but they need to develop their own approaches as well.

The reform of adult education has been put front and centre by the British government and is aimed at promotion of the lifelong learning, the formation of the necessary professional skills by means of non-formal learning; improvement of career employment prospects; modernization of the existing educational system in accordance with employers' requests; establishment of the financial support programme.

Prospects for further research. We consider the study of the organizational and content aspects of non-formal adult education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to be significant prospects for further research.

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Received 16.05.2024

Accepted 20.06.2024

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ НОРМАТИВНО-ПРАВОВОГО ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ НЕФОРМАЛЬНОЇ ОСВІТИ ДОРΟΣЛИХ У СПОЛУЧЕНОМУ КОРОЛІВСТВІ ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ ТА ПІВНІЧНОЇ ІРЛАНДІЇ

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У статті здійснено аналіз нормативно-правового забезпечення неформальної освіти дорослих у Сполученому Королівстві Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії на матеріалах чинних нормативно-правових актів урядів Англії, Шотландії, Уельсу та Північної Ірландії. Охарактеризовано сучасну систему освіти дорослих в даній країні, яка представлена закладами формальної та неформальної освіти; асоціаціями, радами та комітетами з питань освіти дорослих. Акцентовано увагу на тому, що у Сполученому Королівстві Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії реформування освіти дорослих спрямоване на формування необхідних професійних навичок; покращення можливостей працевлаштування; модернізацію існуючої системи навчання відповідно до запитів роботодавців; створення фінансового забезпечення, яке сприятиме розширенню освітніх можливостей дорослого населення засобами неформального навчання. Автором зазначено, що в кожній країні Сполученого Королівства (Англії, Шотландії, Уельсі та Північній Ірландії) розвиток неформальної освіти дорослих має специфічні особливості: високий ступінь автономії для всіх постачальників, співробітництво та партнерство між освітніми установами і роботодавцями та інші. Представлено діяльність провайдерів освітніх послуг у сфері неформального навчання (неприбуткові, благодійні, приватні організації, університети, коледжі та інші освітні установи). Узагальнено, що реформування освіти дорослих є пріоритетним завданням британського уряду та забезпечується відповідними законодавчими актами в кожній країні з метою поширення компетенції навчання протягом життя.

Ключові слова: навчання впродовж життя, неформальна освіта, нормативно-правове забезпечення, освіта дорослих, Сполучене Королівство Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії.